

Life of the Spirit

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Life of the Spirit

A review devoted to the theology and practice of prayer and the spiritual life, it is designed to assist in the re-establishment of the Catholic tradition of ascetical and mystical writing in the English language. Contributors are therefore encouraged to submit original MSS. or translations from the Fathers.

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Life of the Spirit

Vol. I

MARCH 1947

No. 9

THE CROSS AND SUFFERING

BY

BEDE JARRETT, O.P.¹



IN giving us the way in which we should serve God, our blessed Lord laid down a principle that the disciple is not above the master and that presumably no one should be surprised if they found that a way of life good enough for the Son of God was good enough for them, and so he effectually put a stop to any complaint on our part. The highest way of life is the way of the Master; there is none higher. By such a standing only are we to judge our own lives. We talk of the success and of the failure of our life or of the lives of others; we are accustomed to speak of one life as happy, of another as full of tragedy.

The supreme ideal of Christian life was the Master's; would the people of his own time have said that his life was a failure or a success as they stood on Calvary? Why!—a failure, of course. Even those in sympathy lost all hope. We have women coming to anoint the dead body with no thought whatever of the risen life. The disciples on the way to Emmaus, even on the day of the resurrection, when he noticed their quite obvious depression and asked the reason, were astonished that he did not know the defeat of the Master and that a dream was over, gone! 'We *had* hoped', a complete failure—not only to his own disciples but to everyone it looked like the end of a great career that had promised well. They remembered his miracles absolutely. 'He saved others, himself he cannot save'. A taunt—a jeer. They knew all about it but it did not move them to any sort of sympathy; they remembered and it struck them as amusing that *himself* he could not save.

We know it wasn't a failure. He had done *all* his Father gave him to do! *Consummatum est*. But it *looked* a failure, that is the way of human life. St John the Baptist was a popular preacher and then the crowds left him. All poured out to hear him and then he died in prison, even our Lord does nothing at all to save him. The disciples of St John the Baptist were furious—'All the crowd is going to him whom you pointed out', they said to him. 'I must decrease

¹ From a retreat preached in Edinburgh in July, 1930.

that he may increase', he answered them. He was a perfect success. His own work was to be a failure. He came only to gather the crowd and leave it—pass them on to our Lord. He had to decrease, that was his vocation, his business. He was the precursor, the herald, and if all men treated the herald with great honour the King might be forgotten. He is meant to be a failure, it is not his doom but his glory.

'The disciple is not above the master.' You must not complain. The more desolate you are, the nearer to your Master. No disciple has any business to say, 'Look how I am treated'. If you were to go through all your own particular trouble you would find more still of the same thing in the life of the Master. We are mere followers. The cross is what he aimed at and so we should at least stifle our complaints.

We are so apt to grumble—physical pain—what is there to cry about? Why should everyone in the house know you did not sleep last night? Had he not nights of watching on the hillside—praying in the garden—torture during the passion? Surely we can bear pain if not with pleasure at least in silence. High and fantastic? Yes, but we are Christians. Is it not rather to our credit to be misunderstood; are we not then nearer to our Master? Why are we so fearfully excited about it? 'We meant so well and such misunderstandings are terrible.' 'And he was silent'; he answered them nothing. Why should he? What does it matter; why should we grumble? He was deprived of all God's sensible presence. The darkness of the earth was not so dark as that which descended on his heart. 'No one has sorrow like unto my sorrow'. No one in all the world.

Our lives have to be lived on the highest plane. It is difficult to flesh and blood courageously to cry, 'I am glad', when suffering comes. Well, we need not; we are only asked to carry our cross. We *called* ourselves his followers. He carried his cross and we, his followers, must do it after him. It is part of the game; if we don't want to play we must leave the playground; if we stay we must keep the rules and they are that we must share his suffering. He will suffer all our sufferings, carry *all* our griefs. We can carry only a certain amount; he will measure it out to us as medicine is measured to a sick child; drop by drop he pours it out. *He* knows what we can stand and he will only try us up to the edge of what we can bear—up to the hilt, yes, no further.

He knows how far he can go and he will go that far. He will treat us as himself—a cross, and in it just what suits our particular temperament, as a mother chooses a gift to suit the temperament of each of her children. The cross will be for our weak-point, where we can be touched on the raw; not what he gives others, that would

be unjust. There will be nothing heroic in it; we might swagger if there were. Awful to give us something we could value, to be buoyed up by suffering. He takes care to give us humiliating things to bear—that is what really we need, something that really *does* press hard. We know—surely we know—he gives us those things specially trying to our character. He made us all and he acts as an architect building a house, wide windows, but for a hot country narrow windows to keep out the sun. God is an architect and he builds to suit each one of us individually; so our crosses are always individual. God is infinite, and so can attend to every human life. He treats us not as a mass or as cases, but as individual human beings. He knows our past and our future, he knows to what extreme limit our strength can respond. The cross is his way of life for us. He is our Master. We have chosen to be in his school, so it is foolish to cry out and complain; we have let ourselves in for it. It is a personal business, this cross-bearing. He knows the limit. On our part it is asked that we should accept it and realise that it is his will, and that settles the question. His will is the one thing in our life. He knows what he is doing, and we know that he knows. He knows, measures, chooses.

We must train ourselves to see God's will in everything, even in the weather. We are so impatient even if kept waiting, and that is God's will. 'Can't I try to make life comfortable?' Of course. But if you *can't*, take it and accept it as it is! It is God's gift to us. So God's will is to be the great subject of our prayer, our Mass, our meditation. It is the vast orchestra responding to his conducting. It is the highest sanctity not merely to accept it but joyfully to make it ours. No grumbling! The high water mark of sanctity is to suffer, not grumblingly, but with joy, as he suffered, light heartedly, though the sweat of blood was flowing to the ground, though beaten and struck, still there was real joy in his heart. He was *glad* of this chance to *show* his love and he took it.

That joyfulness may be for us a long way off, but we must hope one day to be able to bear suffering without complaining. To do this is only negative; we should strive to bear it joyously, gladly, as the Master did. The deepest teaching that he gave was that he chastises not according to sins, but according to his love of you. Comforting? Stooping to your weakness. Measure his love by his apparent unkindness. When he asks something hard of us it shows he trusts us, it is the highest expression of love. Pain *can* go hand in hand with pleasure, side by side—*should*, I suppose. A dream? Start by being silent, and *trust* whatever he gives. It is *he* who gives it and this knowledge should make us content. We should learn from him the way we should walk, and he takes care we do learn it. 'The disciple

is not above his master.' This should finish our grumbles, and we should be *glad*—at any rate accept, and one day, if we try to be faithful, he will lead us to the greatest things, and teach us to meet life not only with patience but even with joy.

A RULE OF LIFE

BY

CONRAD PEPLER, O.P.



HE first conversion has been accomplished and grace begins its gradual work of supernaturalizing the whole man. In this way a man begins to lead an upright life, upright because directed at last towards his true and last end; his life is now straightened out. This is what Scripture means by the word 'righteousness'. The righteous man is the upright man; he is not bent away from God. He is 'plumb'. This plumbness begins with the spiritual life of grace. But to build 'plumb', a man must have a plumb-line; he must have a measure. Rightness, rectitude, demands a rule, and the righteous man is a man who lives according to rule. St Thomas contrasts this rectitude of moral life with that of justice which deals with external goods, and he says, 'This type of rectitude which implies the order towards a fitting end and the divine law which is the rule of the human will is common to every virtue' (I-II, lv, 4 ad 4). To live uprightly is to live virtuously, according to rule, the straight rule of reason coming out from the divine Reason and the divine law. And St Thomas has another magnificent phrase on this rule of right reason. He is commenting on Psalm 4, verses 6 and 7: *Quis ostendit nobis bona? Signatum est super nos lumen vultus tui, Domine*. 'It is as though the Psalmist says: the light of reason which is in us can only show us good things and regulate our will in so far as it is the light of your (God's) countenance, i.e. derived from your countenance' (I-II, xix, 4). 'The Lord hath led the just by straight paths—*per vias rectas*', says the Psalmist again. A man cannot lead an upright life unless he measure himself by the very countenance of the Almighty. An instrument is 'just' when it is accurately alined with its true measure. The just man must be alined with the mind of God. And this mind of God is interpreted to him in many ways through the human reason. So the just man lives according to rule—the one fact which the Stoics saw clearly.

The author of the *Ancren Riwele* thus sets out to interpret the divine mind for the regulation of his recluses, and so his first task is

to justify the idea of a Rule for people who might seem to live above law.

'The upright love thee, O Lord', saith God's bride to her beloved bridegroom, those who love thee rightly, those are upright; those who live by a rule (p. 1).

A rule of life is necessary for all the just, but a special one needs to be written for those who adopt a special kind of life. This needs to be understood. It may seem like imposing a straight jacket from outside to force the will into shape and thus rob it of freedom. The beginner must adopt a rule but he must not regard it as slavery. He must penetrate its inner meaning.

The Introduction to the *Rivle* clarifies the issue by distinguishing two types of regulation. Both are to be made principles of action, but they are of unequal importance:

There are many kinds of rules; but among them all there are two of which, with God's help, I will speak by your request. The one rules the heart, and makes it even and smooth without knot or wound-mark of evil or accusing conscience. . . . This rule is always within you, and directs the heart. And this is that charity . . . [of those] who regulate all their wishes by the rule of the divine will: such persons are rightly called good . . . all whom that supreme law hath directed aright which directs all things rightly. . . .

The other rule is outward, and ruleth the body and the deeds of the body. It teaches how men should in all respects bear themselves outwardly; how they should eat and drink, dress, take rest, sleep and walk. And this is bodily exercise, which according to the Apostle profiteth little, and is, as it were, a rule of the science of mechanics, which is a branch of geometry; and this rule is only to serve the other. . . . The inward rule is always alike, the outward is various . . . (pp. 1-3).

The profound wisdom of these remarks is continued for several pages. The understanding of this passage will place the way of the beginner in true perspective and disclose it essentially as *in via* to the further stages. St Thomas has the same doctrine where he speaks of the vows of religious life (II-II clxxxvi) and his distinction between the end or purpose of a rule and its external exercise is applicable to every Christian rule of life.

All are bound to tend to perfection; that is the one interior law, the law of charity common to all upright men. But there are many exterior exercises, the ascetic practices whereby the end is to be achieved. They are means and make up the exterior part of the rule. And these vary from individual to individual or from group to group. Means are so varied and temperaments so inconstant that the out-

ward rule must differ according to circumstances of time, place and person. 'Wherefore this rule', says the author in laying down these principles, 'may be changed and varied according to everyone's state and circumstances' (p. 4).

The outward rule, the author insists, is valuable only in so far as it serves the internal law. So St Thomas says that the New Law consists essentially in the grace of the Holy Spirit, and the written rules of doctrine and behaviour are only *dispositions* to that grace; they are secondary.¹ Naturally therefore the more remote the rule of charity the more predominant is the external rule of conduct so that at the beginning of the spiritual life the Rule takes pride of place. As the Old Law was the pedagogue to the New, so these multifarious rules of external behaviour should lead on to the inner rule of love. These external rules are the handmaid to love, serving the law of charity, according to the *Riivle*.

This handmaid or pedagogue comes first; and the beginner has an impression of the commandments of God, the rules of his new life, as a complex framework imposed upon him from without. He feels it as a constraint limiting his freedom of action like the walls of an anchorhold and its closely guarded windows. At every step he meets a fresh regulation checking or directing him. Life seems full of many things to be done or to be avoided. Such a state is inevitable in the beginner. A man learning to play a game is harassed by a seemingly unending code of rules. The deacon preparing for priesthood practises his 'dry Masses' over and over again. The rubrics are innumerable and only by long exercise can they become part of a man, spontaneous actions needing no thought and leaving him free to dwell on the mystery which they comprise. Or again, the philosopher must first learn logic; but then he learns to forget it—he learns to reason faultlessly without being distracted with the processes of his reasoning. So the beginner in the spiritual life is first imperfect and his imperfection demands restraint. But the further he progresses towards the goal of his *rectitudo*, perfection, the more internal and spontaneous becomes the rule. In proportion as the soul conforms itself to the divine countenance so the 'pressure' from outside decreases and the actions of the will spring from a new desire within. The will begins to act according to the law of love. Loving the divine will, the human will desires only what God desires. An internal impetus has been acquired and there is no longer a sense of pressure from outside the soul. A new freedom is present. The game is learnt; the rules are forgotten because they have become part of the player; being habitual they do not require reflection.

¹ Cf. I-II, cvi, 1; cvii, 1 ad 3.

In this way the external rule is gradually absorbed into the internal: the many commandments of the Old Testament become the one unique commandment of the New. 'The commands of any law', says St Thomas, 'are given concerning virtuous actions. But in exercising acts of virtue the imperfect, who do not yet possess the habit of the virtue, are directed in a different way from those who by the habit of the virtue are perfect. For those still without the habit of the virtue are moved to exercise the works of virtue by some *extrinsic* cause, from the threat of penalties or the promise of some external reward such as honour, riches or the like. . . . But those having the habit of virtue are moved to the exercise of virtue through love of virtue' (I-II, cvii, 1 ad 2). So the perfect come to realise that there is only one law, the law of love—*Dilige et quod vis fac*.

In the Introduction the author of this rule does not reduce the internal law to its simplest and most unified form. He regards as sufficiently fundamental and internal the rule of reason, according to its measurement by the divine countenance, the ten commandments and all that must of necessity be fulfilled by the perfect.

'But charity or love, and meekness and patience, truthfulness, and keeping the ten old commandments, confession and penitence, these and such others, some of which are of the old law, some of the new, are not of man's invention nor a rule established by man, but they are the commandments of God, and therefore every man is bound and obliged to keep them, and you most of all—for they govern the heart' (p. 6).

We must look further into the *Ancren Riwle* to find how the one law of love 'fulfils all the law and the prophets'. At the end of his description of the inward rule, the author shows that love is the supreme measure and that everything else is eventually reducible to that final simplification which was made by our Lord himself. 'This love is the rule which regulates the heart. This rule is the lady or mistress. *All the others serve her*, and for her sake alone they ought to be loved' (p. 311).

The beginner after his conversion, therefore, has to adopt some kind of rule of life, at first external, irksome and cramping. This is part of the initial *ascesis*. As he progresses, the multifarious external regulations are gradually modified into a single internal law; constraint presses the soul into unity, it acquires the habit of love which embraces all the desires of God. At length the soul does not have to be pressed into God's service, but yearns to fulfil his every wish from an internal impetus. The *Riwle* even dissuades the young anchorites from taking a vow to keep these external rules: 'You should not vow it, but keep it in your heart, and perform it as though

you had vowed it' (p. 7). The outward rule is not transcended, it is transformed. The inward is not an antinomian principle pretending that no rules are necessary. The will is trained and disciplined until it is united to God and instinctively follows his least command—'For your will and the will of God shall be in such unison that ye shall wish whatsoever he will, and he whatsoever ye wish' (p. 141). It would be not only ridiculous, but criminal, to maintain that the more perfect the soul becomes the less it is bound by the general rules for the good life. These rules remain in force throughout, from the first stirrings of reason to the highest stages of the spiritual life; but when they become consciously informed by a fervent charity they become spontaneous desires of the soul. The priest is bound by the rubrics of the Mass even when he is so well versed in the spirit of the Holy Sacrifice that they have become almost instinctive in him.

So the Introduction concludes its teaching on the meaning of a rule of life:

Do good and deem thyself ever weak, and with fear and love walk with God thy Lord. Wherever these things are there is true religion and there is right order; and to do all the other things and leave this undone is mere trickery and deceit. All that a good recluse does or thinks, according to the external rule, is altogether for this end; it is only as an instrument to promote this true religion; it is only a slave to help the lady to rule the heart (p. 10).

When a man first turns towards God and seeks his own perfection he can maintain himself on that narrow way only by many exterior and irksome helps. But as he gains inward strength and vitality he no longer rests on such supports. Now there is a living love within him forcing him onwards and upwards. He sees only his goal, the possession of God; and his desire urges him joyously to search for all that may bring him nearer to the fulfilment of this one need. A complex rule of life becomes simplified into the one single rule.

The type of rule here recommended is typical of the English school as contrasted with the more violent and spectacular forms found on the Continent. It is more gentle, more considerate of human frailty than its counterparts of more southerly climes. The northern air preaches moderation in penance and attention to the general needs of the body. The phlegmatic Englishman has never been enthusiastic about external rules, for he does not willingly reveal his interior ambitions any more than his internal emotions. The warm blood of the south seems to him excessive in all things, excessive in sanctity as in sinning. We may find a gentle human element in all the mystics of 14th-century England; but it goes further back than that. St Aelred of Rievaulx shows it in his writings of the 12th century. He is in fact

one of the only spiritual writers who has gone out of his way to justify human friendship as part of the spiritual life, and far from being against the rule.² 'I began to wonder', he writes, 'whether Scripture had any blessing to give to friendship, or was it only a thing that paganism had praised? However I had found that the letters of the Saints were full of references to friendship' (*The English Way*, p. 88.) Thus he set out on the quest for a human love within the embrace of the divine. 'Particular friendships' have often been condemned on account of their abuse in religious life; but there is something of this same sympathetic approach in some of Richard Rolle's work, while the *Ancoren Riwele* takes it for granted that the recluse will have special friends. The author condemns one type of friendship, 'for no enmity is so bad as false friendship' (p. 73), but that is because it is false. True friendship may justify breaking into the routine of the external rule. 'Silence always at meals . . . and if any one hath a guest whom she holds dear, she may cause her maid, as in her stead, to entertain her friend with glad cheer; and she shall have leave to open her window once or twice, and make signs to her of gladness at seeing her' (p. 54). The thought of the death of a dear friend will often prove efficacious in driving away temptation (p. 183, cf. pp. 313-314).

The same spirit which some might even call humanist is manifest in the insistence on the interior law of love, which we have already discussed, and the elastic attitude to external regulations—religion is 'not in the wide hood, nor in the black, nor in the white, nor in the grey cowl' (pp. 9-10). The anchoress devotes her life to prayer and meditation, yet she is not to force herself into this occupation. 'Often dear sisters ye ought to pray less, that ye may read more. Reading is good prayer. Reading teacheth how, and for what we ought to pray' (p. 215). The full sum of the prayers enjoined by the rule is not obligatory in any strict sense: 'And whoso cannot say these five prayers, should say always one: and whoso thinketh them too long may omit the psalms' (p. 30). Infirmary of course may excuse wholly or in part from the recitation of Office which is otherwise the mainstay of their lives (pp. 37-38). The attitude at prayer should be restful rather than strained; and Rolle's suggestion that he found it easier to pray in a sitting position finds its parallel in this direction for morning prayers: 'Begin directly *Creator Spirit, come*, with your eyes and your hands raised up towards heaven, bending forward on your knees upon the bed, and thus say the whole hymn' (p. 13) which sounds very like a modern lad at prayer. The recluse may often please herself as to the

² Cf. Bede Jarrett's study in *The English Way*: and Hugh Talbot's translation, with Introduction, *Christian Friendship*. (Catholic Book Club.)

number of prayers she should say and the position in which she says them: 'Whoso will may stand up immediately after the first prayer' (p. 34, cf. p. 27).

In spite of his Platonic-Augustinian idea of the soul's relation to the body, the author of the *Rivle* lays great stress on moderation in penances:

Though the flesh be our foe, we are yet commanded to sustain it. We must, however, afflict it, as it often well deserves; but not withal to destroy it; for, how weak soever it be, still it is so coupled, and so firmly united to our precious soul, God's own image, that we might soon kill the one with the other. And this is one of the greatest wonders on earth, that the highest thing under God, which is the soul of man, as S. Austin testifieth, should be so firmly joined to the flesh, which is only mud and dirty earth. (p. 105).

It is, therefore, a natural prudence or discretion rather than any Aristotelian conception of the physico-spiritual unity of man that makes the author preach moderation. Although the true religious will take as little as possible of any worldly thing, yet the anchoress may without sin live in comfortable sufficiency: 'All that man or woman desireth more than is sufficient for leading life comfortably, according to their station, is covetousness' (p. 153). Nor should she disdain human consolations, talking with her maids and diverting herself with instructive tales when she feels low or dispirited, especially after the quarterly blood-letting and in times of sickness. Sickness is to be accepted gladly when it comes, but it would be foolhardiness to court it in any way and it 'displeaseth God' to do so. The devil uses such folly to draw the soul away from God: 'he incites her to so much abstinence that she is rendered the less able to endure fatigue in the service of God, and leads so hard a life, and so torments the body, that the soul dieth' (p. 168). He endeavours to make some one so zealous to flee from the things that make the life of man agreeable, that she falls into the deadly evil of sloth' (p. 170). These are words of sound wisdom to the beginner seeking a new way of life and often tempted to excess in the penitential and external practices of the ascetic life.

When the anchoress retires to bed she should sleep: 'In bed, as far as you can, neither do anything nor think, but sleep' (p. 37). She may wash as often as she pleases, and may on no account wear hair-cloth or irons or chains without the special and express leave of her director. The same holds for fasting. All this may be considered sound common sense, but a de Rancé would surely frown at the permission to keep a pet, even though the permission is strictly limited to one cat! (p. 316).

The *Riwele* shows considerable understanding of the human character, especially in its first assault on the castle of the spiritual life when over-exertion disheartens the beginner and may cause him to fall back into his old ways. But judged by modern standards it establishes a very austere form of living, and in no sense does it pander to human weakness. The life here described has no trace of a false, over-tolerant humanism; it does not attempt to water down the Christian spirit. It does not set forth a merely natural and man-centred ideal, nor preach mediocrity under a cloak of holy moderation. Mediocrity has indeed typified English spirituality for a long time, but the tepid Anglo-Saxon could not persevere for many days under this *Riwele*. The author insists that the life must be hard and austere; he outlines a mode of existence which many today, even of the devout, would regard as imprudent if not unnatural. On the subject of penance, he preaches—as he admits—pure St Bernard, and *he* was no meddler with the joys of this world.

The usual arguments against mortification have to be silenced:

‘My dear sir’, someone may say, ‘is it wisdom now for a man or woman thus to afflict themselves? . . . Who is there who is not sick of sin? For our sickness God drank a poisonous drink upon the Cross. And will not we taste any bitter remedy for ourselves? It must not be so. It is not so. His followers must surely follow him in his suffering with bodily pain’ (p. 275).

Then the same moderating voice is heard again: ‘“Will God avenge himself so severely upon sin?” Yes, o man or woman, for consider now how greatly he hateth it’ (p. 276). And finally come the popular attacks on voluntary penance: ‘What is God profited though I afflict myself for his love?’ and ‘Sir, does God sell his grace? Is not grace a free gift?’ To the first the author replies: ‘Dear man or woman, God is pleased with our good. Our good is that we do what we ought . . .’ And to the second: ‘Although purity is not bought of God, but given freely, ingratitude resisteth it, and renders those unworthy to possess so excellent a thing who will not cheerfully submit to work for it’ (p. 277). He here deals with the arguments against mortification in the right order; but we will consider them in detail when we come to deal with the purgations of the purgative way.

There is little softness about this rule of life; the beginner must lead a rugged life. After the first conversion, indeed, purgation plays the central part; the purgative way means that the Cross must have greater prominence now than in the further stages. This applies particularly to the physical penances of the beginner.

Let not anyone handle herself too gently, lest she deceive herself. She will not be able for her life to keep herself pure, nor to maintain herself aright in chastity without two things, as Saint Ailred

wrote to his sister. The one is, giving pain to the flesh by fasting, by watching, by flagellations, by wearing coarse garments, by a hard bed, with sickness, with much labour. The other is the moral qualities of the heart (p. 278).

And yet the author concludes his treatise on penance by saying that what he has written about austerity and hardship is not for those to whom he is directly addressing himself, as they seem to him often to suffer too much, but for others inclined to laxity.

This gentleness must not be confounded with a spirit of naturalism. Such a confusion has often occurred in modern times since pragmatism has sunk deeply into the spirit and a practice is regarded as valueless and even harmful unless it serve a humanitarian or social purpose. Contemplation is at a discount because it is useless to humanity; mortification finds no place in the utility scheme, for an emaciated body is an affront to the happiness and welfare of mankind. This may be stating it crudely and there are many subtleties to justify this false humanism: Christ by his Incarnation has sanctified the natural man, nature has been perfected by grace, the pleasures and comforts of this life should be raised into an integrated supernatural state of wholeness, life rather than death is the characteristically Christian word. . . . Such specious reasoning might obscure the constant Christian insistence on subduing the body, overcoming the effects of original sin and making satisfaction for past evils by means of severe and voluntary mortifications. Severity and sharp suffering should not be mistaken for harshness or manichean hatred of the flesh. We shall see that these anchoresses were well schooled in the practice of mortification and a profound understanding of the meaning of the Cross. Modern thinkers sometimes forget that St Thomas speaks as a philosopher of nature as such, of the passions as such, and that fallen human nature with all the wounds of original sin and its unruly and disorganised passions call down on themselves the death penalty of mortification. They tend to forget the gravity of mortal sin, for they look rather at man than at God. They tend to forget the meaning of the Cross and the infinite distance that separates the supernatural order of grace from the purely natural order.³ Our Lord taught the need for mortification and St Paul followed him in this. We shall see how the *Ancrén Riwle* insists on it. The gentleness of the *Riwle* is not naturalism.

³ Cf. Garrigou-Lagrange, O.P., *Les Trois Âges*, i, pp. 376 sqq.

FASHION IN SAINTS

ST JOHN OF THE CROSS

BY

ROSALIND MURRAY



O one but a saint should attempt to write about a saint. This is less evidently so in the case of active saints or martyrs, those whose external actions, whose whole lives are in themselves striking or edifying; then a biography can be of interest in the same way as it would be of any other outstanding personality; but of the contemplative saint, the mystic, there is often little to recount in the medium of time and place; very often they are monks or nuns whose entire lives have passed in uneventful routine of religious duties; the drama is interior and hidden.

It is true that St Teresa founded convents, that St John of the Cross was for a time in prison, that St Bernard and St Catherine intervened in the political crises of their times. But these are not the important things about them; these actions, however useful and successful, are accidental, and subsidiary to the true significance of their lives—the union of their souls with God in love, and even in the more specific sense, union through the interior way of contemplation.

And since this interior drama of sanctity, the process by which the soul is transformed into the likeness of God it contemplates, is dependent on supernatural grace, it is essentially a secret and a holy drama, not to be publicised or desecrated by any idle curiosity.

‘This place is holy’, and ‘This thing is holy’. Unless we experience some such reaction, we are failing to apprehend the mysteries that we are prying into, and in so far as we do so re-act, we feel, and rightly, our own unfitness to expound them. We who are full of sin and imperfection, who are unmortified and self-indulgent, wallowing in our ‘attachment to creatures’, how dare we venture on this holy ground?

‘. . . For there are no words to expound such sublime things of God as come to pass in these souls; whereof the proper way to speak is for one that knows them, to understand them inwardly and to feel them inwardly and enjoy them and be silent concerning them.’¹

This is, I believe, the usual reaction of devout Christians to St

¹ *Living Flame*, Sta. II, 21.

John of the Cross. These mysteries of God's working in the soul are not to be exploited and popularised; better to say nothing than say too much. Yet we are witnessing today a paradoxical situation; this saint of the Dark Night of the extreme annihilation of self, has become unaccountably 'the fashion'; he has become, in a certain sense, 'popular' and more especially so among non-Christians. What does this mean? How can it be explained?

There are, I think, two important points to note, one general and one particular. The first is that no saint will ever be 'popular' through his real sanctity. He can, through sanctity, be loved and venerated; he can stir multitudes and the hearts of sinners, but this deep dynamism of holiness is quite different from popularity, from being 'the fashion'. Popularity, in the sense we mean it, is necessarily shallow; it suggests a drifting with the current, a being 'in the swim', being 'up to date', having the right reaction at the right moment; it is, as *fashion*, subservience to a group-opinion, however rarified the group.

It is a misfortune for any great man to become the fashion in this way, for it necessarily involves some misapprehension of his greatness, the reduction of his excellence, in whatever medium, to the level of the non-excelling, the making easy of what is hard to grasp. There is something sacrilegious in the exploitation of genius, in whatever field of human action; when it concerns the genius of sanctity, the sacrilege is so much the greater. True sanctity can no more be the fashion than can the Cross. What is seized upon and made popular is always secondary and accidental.

The degree to which a mercenary motive has debased so much popular devotion among the pious is well known. The element of *quid-pro-quo* is often shamelessly explicit; what is venerated in such cases is clearly far less the holiness of the saint, than his 'mana' as a wonder worker. The same principle holds good in many less obvious ways, and this leads us to the second point to be considered, the present cult of St John of the Cross among non-Christians. It is interesting to contrast his *clientèle* from this point of view with that of Ste Thérèse of Lisieux. Being so close in the true character of their sanctity, it is striking that these two great contemplatives appeal to so widely different a public. The 'Little Flower' is hardly known outside the circle of Catholic piety, while within it, she is the most popular of saints, and popular in the most literal sense, as appealing to the simple many. St John of the Cross, her avowed master and teacher, is rarely venerated within the Church; there are no statues of him to be met with, nor is he asked for favours by the crowd; his devotees are largely found in literary or artistic circles to which the majority of the saints are of no interest and

remain little known. It is generally admitted that the popular conception of Ste Thérèse as the insipid *jeune fille* scattering roses, bears very little resemblance to the real saint. Her formidable doctrine is disregarded in an uncritical reliance on the power of her intercession. Because she painted sentimental pictures and wrote, to order, sentimental verse, we take refuge now in sentiment, from the remorseless abnegation of will explicit in her whole life and in her teaching. Much of the popular devotion to her, in fact, rests on a sentimental misconception.

There seems at first no danger of this kind in connection with St John of the Cross. No hagiographer can represent him as offering an easy way to Heaven; for two hundred years, indeed, his uncompromising demands would seem to have so far repelled the general public, that he remained little known outside his Order.

Strive always to choose, not that which is easiest but that which is most difficult;

Not that which is most delectable, but that which is most unpleasing;

Not that which gives most pleasure, but rather that which gives least;

Not that which is restful, but that which is wearisome;

Not that which gives consolation, but rather that which makes disconsolate;

Not that which is greatest, but that which is least;

Not that which is loftiest and most precious, but that which is lowest and most despised.

Not that which is a desire for anything, but that which is a desire for nothing.

Strive not to go about seeking the best of temporal things, but the worst;

Strive thou to desire to enter into complete detachment and emptiness and poverty, with respect to that which is in the world, for Christ's sake.²

Such injunctions are not peculiar to one saint; they are the essence of asceticism throughout the ages; *Agere contra* is the one foundation of all personal training in virtue, the necessary preparation for re-birth. But the principle of self-annihilation has never been more relentlessly carried through into all aspects of life; it cannot be glossed over and put aside as irrelevant or accidental. We must divest ourselves, he tells us, not only of every temporal and material good, but even of spiritual goods; even authentic visions sent by God are to be disregarded and forgotten, lest we take pleasure in

2 The *Ascent of Mount Carmel*, Bk. I, ch. xiii.

the less-than-God. The annihilation of self is total. This doctrine in so unmitigated a form may well alarm the ordinary well-meaning Christian.

In his preface to the *Ascent of Mount Carmel*, St John himself explains that his 'principal intent is not to address all, but rather certain persons of our sacred Order of Mount Carmel, monks and nuns . . . who, as they are already detached from the temporal things of this world, will better understand the instruction concerning detachment of spirit'.

It is not surprising then, that up till recent years, St John of the Cross should have been regarded as too 'high and rare' for average people. What is surprising is the prevalence today of an attitude towards him of easy familiarity among people very far indeed from being 'detached from the temporal things of this world'. If we attempt to take this austere doctrine seriously, not as a poetic *jeu d'esprit*, but as a real guide to real life, it may well daunt our lukewarm and half-hearted aspirations. But it is sounder to be so daunted, to recognise our lack of courage in face of a reality so stark, than to acclaim it without understanding.

Much of the non-Christian enthusiasm for this great Christian teacher may be explained by the difference between the æsthetic and the religious response to what we may call the 'beauty of holiness'. Unlike the Little Flower, St John is not only a great saint but a great poet; and though full appreciation of his verse is clearly limited to Spanish scholars, even in translation, the sheer beauty of his imagery and ideas makes its impact. The distinction between the æsthetic and the religious is often difficult to estimate, and where the 'beauty of holiness' is concerned they may be intimately inter-related. Yet, however combined and synthesised, the two responses are distinct; and in appreciation of a saint, the difference is fundamental.

As connoisseur, as critic, as dilettante, I may appreciate, as a work of art, the saint whose quality has caught my fancy, whether as poet or as romantic figure, as picturesque or as 'intriguing'. I am not from this point of view involved in any claim of teaching or of example; his martyrdom, from such a standpoint, evokes no call to martyrdom in me; no passionate utterance of his love of God need stir misgivings in my tepid heart. At most, I may be moved to paint a picture or write a poem. His life and death and sacrificial witness are not related in any direct way to my own living.

For the Christian, on the other hand, the saint stands in a wholly different relation. As Christians, our appreciation involves acceptance of his witness to God's truth, as mediator and exemplar; As saint, he is, for us, an *alter Christus*, through whom, by means of whom, we too are, potentially, sanctified. If he is martyred, we are

so much the more called upon to prepare for martyrdom. Through contemplation of his sacrifice, we too are called upon to sacrificial living.

Enthusiasm for St John of the Cross costs nothing to the dilettante pagan; but for the Christian, in the degree to which he is in earnest, it must involve the Ascent of Mount Carmel; and, knowing his own weakness, he hesitates.

From the multitude of saints whose heroic virtues have glorified the Church, so very few have influenced non-Christian thought at all; most are unknown, even by name, to the quite educated modern mind. How is it that this comparatively hidden figure has penetrated the pagan fortress? The difference in personal relation may account for the much easier enthusiasm among non-Christians for St John of the Cross, when once they know him; it does not explain the force of his initial impact on such alien and unprepared soil. Although that impact may be largely æsthetic, it does undoubtedly extend, in its own fashion, to his doctrine. The æsthetic enthusiasm is aroused, in fact, not only by the expressions but by the content.

What quality, what special characteristic in this totalitarian asceticism has woken so unexpected a response in the contemporary mind?

Here it is important to distinguish between mere fashion and the deep movement of response which has for some real reason been aroused in more than one contemporary mind. It is essentially the difference between sincerity and imitation, between the spontaneous and the artificial, between appearance and reality. The majority will always be merely followers and conformers, and in this respect the eclectic circle simply reflects in microcosm the mass movements of the world outside; but the real stirring of the *Zeitgeist* is none the less a significant reality.

In times of an extreme materialism, an extreme emphasis on spirit will exercise a corresponding attraction; in times of excessive movement, stillness. Such an assertion as,

‘If the whole universe and all that is in it were in confusion, disquietude on that account would be folly . . .’³

challenges the public opinion around us so profoundly that it provokes an instinctive response in certain minds. From a satiety of United Nations of Atlantic Charters and Five Freedoms, it is alluring to escape into what can so easily be envisaged as the ‘Immunity of pure spirit’. The flight from matter and time has always been the first reaction from materialism, and many passages from St John’s writings, taken out of their context and isolated, lend themselves to such interpretation. The extent to which quotations from the Scrip-

³ *Ascent of Mount Carmel*; Bk III, ch. v.

tures can be chosen to support widely different points of view should prepare us for the dangers of a one-sided selection. In all expression of, or attempts to express, spiritual truth beyond a certain depth, there will be apparent contradiction. The polarity and dialectic of what is in fact beyond expression in words, will manifest itself in paradox, as the Gospels constantly exemplify. Truth is essentially a synthesis of the apparently conflicting, a multiplicity in unity, and this creative tension is implicit throughout the writings of the saint, whose very condemnation of all 'forms' finds expression in the most vivid and glowing imagery. If either element in the tension is over-emphasised or isolated, the whole is falsified, yet this deceptive over-simplification is a universal human impulse. Instinctively we seize those points which seem to answer an immediate need, and overlook the complementary dialectic.

In the case of any single author, moreover, there is, apart from the subjective selection of the reader, always some element of subjective choice in what he has himself picked out and stressed. No individual, however inspired, can apprehend, still less express, the total truth. He, like all other men, makes a selection, and the principle of his selection is influenced by his environment. With many authors of another age, this conditioning by time and place is obvious. We are sometimes checked and disconcerted by the embodiment of the idea in forms which are no longer natural to us, but this is not so with St John of the Cross. With him the spiritual content so dominates the external form, he seems so detached from time and place, that it is difficult to see him in a historical relation; yet for a full understanding of his thought it is necessary to do so. Like all great saints he is both out of time and in time; and his temporal conditions, the time and place in which he lived and wrote, the circumstances of those he was addressing, have a bearing on his principle of selection. For instance, he assumes a world of almost bigoted devotion with which we are not called to deal today, and this alone explains much of the emphasis and the omissions which are so apt to be misunderstood.

If these considerations are ignored, it is not difficult to present the great Doctor of the Church as almost Stoic or Buddhist, or even as the exponent of a supra-doctrinal syncretism. This picture is very clearly drawn in Aldous Huxley's *Perennial Philosophy*. And here another factor enters in: the reaction against materialism, against an excessive attention to time and place, may be a merely general resistance to a mass-suggestion become irksome; but in certain cases it may be a more personal movement of liberation from a more concentrated oppression. For those who come to St John of the Cross from a background, not of negative indifference but from a positive

dogmatic rationalism, the impact and response may be of a far more dynamic nature. His doctrine, even in part misunderstood, taken as it is almost sure to be, in far too simplified a form, may break upon them with redemptive force. The very intransigence which abashes the more sophisticated Christian attracts and captivates the soul escaping from the bonds of sheer materialism. To such a one the reality of spirit is itself a revelation. It is the password of his liberation; and it may well be that, at such a moment, to press the fuller apprehension of the Christian idea of Incarnation would be not only useless but impeding—let him follow where the spirit leads. To such a reader, St John of the Cross may be in his very intransigence the gentlest and the most persuasive guide to an acceptance of the Christian wholeness. If he will read him, not just once or twice but many times, with a receptive mind, the depth and fullness of his teaching will lead on beyond the first still incomplete reaction into the multiplicity of truth.

From such a point of view we may then see the present cult of St John of the Cross, stripped of its superficial, unreal aspects, as an instinctive movement of liberation from the worship of time and place. Here as everywhere the crucial question will be found to be humility. If the 'discoverer' of St John of the Cross insists on using the saint simply as a means to his own ends, he will profit little by his discovery, but in so far as he can be receptive, ready to listen, he will find his first impression insufficient: a beginning and not an end.

I would then that I could convince spiritual persons that this road to God consists . . . only in the one thing that is needful, which is the ability to deny oneself truly, according to that which is without and to that which is within, giving oneself up to suffering for Christ's sake, and to total annihilation. For the soul that thus denies itself will achieve this suffering and annihilation and more also, and will likewise find more than suffering and annihilation therein. And if a soul be found wanting in this exercise, which is the sum and root of the virtues, all its other methods are so much wandering about in a maze and profiting not at all. . . . For progress comes not save through the imitation of Christ, Who is the Way, the Truth and the Life, and no man comes to the Father but by Him.⁴

In a true apprehension of the saint we must recognise the poet, but it is even more essential, in any apprehension of the poet, to recognise and to venerate the saint.

4 *Ascent of Mount Carmel*; Bk II, ch. vii.

AGNUS DEI

BY

COLUMBA CARY ELWES, O.S.B.



FRAY LOUIS OF LEON has already treated of this title, but his book is little known and less read—more's the pity—and I have felt justified in treating of it for that reason.¹

We know that it is a title of Christ because St John the Baptist gave it him when they met, for the first time in early manhood, on the banks of Jordan. It may seem strange that St John, when pointing out 'him that was to come' to his followers, should from all his titles choose this one: 'Behold the Lamb of God' (*John* i, 29.) Why did St John think 'the Lamb' the title most fitted for the occasion? We can but surmise, yet such surmise may give us insight into the meaning of this title, even if we cannot be sure that all was present to the mind of St John himself or of his hearers.

There was an ancient story told of the father of their race, Abraham, that one day there was demanded of him a sign of real belief in his God and in his God's promises. It took the form of God telling Abraham to kill his only son Isaac in sacrifice. To Abraham this would seem like wiping out all hope of descendants, wiping out likewise the hope that God's past promises about his descendants could come true, namely that they would be as numerous as the sand on the sea shore or as the star dust in the sky. But, even more, it seemed to ruin any hope in the promise of the Saviour of the world born of his children's children. Yet Abraham believed against belief, and took his son up the mountain-side. When Isaac asked his father where the victim lamb was, Abraham made the prophetic reply, which had more meaning than he knew, that God himself would provide the lamb for the sacrifice.² Perhaps when St John saw Christ at that moment, his mind flew back to that episode. For two thousand years and more the Israelites, the descendants of Abraham and Sem, had waited for God to provide the Lamb for sacrifice. Jesus, son of Mary, had come into the world, and he was that sacrificial victim.

This name, besides, was suitable and almost inevitable on the lips of St John, if we remember his teaching: for his message was primarily one of liberation from sin. He made no mistake, the king-

¹ In order to make my treatment fresh, I had avoided reading Fray Luis's section on the Lamb of God in his great book, 'de Los Nombres de Christo', before writing my own.

² Gen. 22, 7-8. cf. LXX and the Hebrew text. The Vulgate however gives *victim*i, probably because God provided a ram.

dom to be founded was one of the spirit, not one of gold, won by a conquest over sin by sacrifice, not over earthly rivals and by war or insurrection. As he stood there at a crossing-place by the running waters of Jordan, he was not stirring up the people to revolt, but to repentance. He made them confess their sins and he cleansed them with the pouring of water.³ Far from preening himself on being the forerunner of a great king, he wore the clothes of sorrow and penance. 'He that was to come' was not about to free the Jews from the slavery of Rome, but was to be the victim offered to God for our sins; he was to be the key to our salvation, the solution. 'Behold the Lamb of God, who taketh away the sins of the world'. All through the past history of Israel the Lamb of sacrifice had stood as a symbol for this being. There is no more essential understanding of the Incarnation than that implied in the title given to Christ by St John the Baptist at the moment when Christ was about to begin his public life. Christ came to save from sin by the sacrifice of himself, a Lamb led to the slaughter.

How wide that saving was indeed, as wide as the world! Not a saving merely from the sins of Israel, but 'the sins of the world'. Perhaps, again, St John's mind had swung back at that moment to Isaias, the prophet of salvation through suffering. It was certainly to such passages as these that Christ himself referred when speaking to those two disillusioned disciples trudging to Emmaus. They were complaining that their hopes for the establishment of the Messianic kingdom had been smashed by the terrible end of the Messiah, an end on a gibbet. He, the Messiah, replied, 'Oh, how dull of vision are ye, and how slow your hearts to believe all that the prophets have said! *Was it not necessary* that the Christ should suffer that, and so enter into his glory? And beginning with Moses and all the prophets he interpreted for them that which concerned himself in all the Scriptures'. (Luke 24, 25-27.) That was the first Easter Day. St Luke gives us no more; what Christ said on that occasion about the prophets and how they spoke of him is not known.⁴ But it is certain that the prophet who clearly spoke of the Messiah suffering and so entering into his glory was Isaias. Here is the passage. *Oblatus est quia ipse voluit, et non aperuit os suum sicut ovis ad occisionem ducetur, et quasi AGNUS coram tondente se obmutescet et non operiet os suum.* (53, 7.) Christ went as a lamb to the slaughter and opened not his mouth before his accusers. Of all the attributes in the Passion of Christ, perhaps the most poignant is his silence, which

³ Luke 3, 3; Mark 1, 6.

⁴ On another occasion Christ read a passage from Isaias 61, 1; 58, 6. cf. Luke 4, 16 ff.

weighed so heavily on the consciences of the priests and on that of Pilate and on the pride of Herod.

The point our Lord was making with those disappointed walkers to Emmaus was that the Messiah was to conquer his kingdom only through suffering in meekness for the sins of many. All Christians likewise will fight their way to the standard-bearer, Christ, by suffering silently, patiently, meekly. The whole world has been straining for conquest by the sword and by pride and self-assertion. But those weapons are the reverse of the weapons used by Christ; his sword was love, his shield patience, his helmet silence, his breast-plate meekness. We are given no word of his when soldiers whipped him with thongs, no word when they mocked and crowned him, or when they spat upon him; his words on the Cross were of understanding and forgiveness of his enemies, or of compassion for Mary his mother and for John his friend.

This reference to the prophet Isaias has a more extended meaning than as a symbol for patience. The lamb was the special animal for sacrifice. Christ was the lamb of sacrifice, the sacrifice of the New Law, the complete holocaust, the burnt offering. This should be borne in mind when considering the Last Supper. The more the life of Christ is examined, the more pre-meditated and organic each act proves to have been. He chose to go up to Jerusalem, not at any nondescript time, but at the Pasch, which, as everyone knows, was the Jewish feast celebrated with immense pomp to commemorate the liberation of the Israelites from Egyptian bondage. This freeing from slavery was the natural symbol for the freeing from sin, from the enemies of the soul. Now, just as the Israelites had been saved from the killing of every eldest son by putting the blood of a lamb on their door-posts, and then set out for the desert after the sacrificial meal, so every year devout Jews from every country under heaven, Parthians and Medes, and Elamites and inhabitants of Mesopotamia, Judea and Cappadocia, Pontus and Asia, Phrygia and Pamphylia, Egypt and the parts of Libya which are about Cyrene, and strangers from Rome, Jews also and proselytes, Cretes and Arabians (*Acts* 2, 9-11), would make pilgrimage to Jerusalem as sign of their gratitude. There they would sacrifice in their homes by a meal, just as it had been done 1,300 years before. With skirts tucked up ('loins girt') and feet shod, with staves in their hands they would, as it were, be ready for the journey of deliverance. (*Exodus* 12, 1.) That ancient delivery had been the saving of the race, and there had to be for ever a thanksgiving for it by the race. But the sacrificial meal before the great Exodus had been done in the privacy of every home; consequently, ever after it was repeated in the same manner.

This eating of the lamb had been no mere meal, but a sacrificial

one: *immolabitque eum universum multitudinem filiorum Israel ad vesperam*. Thus Christ celebrated in Jerusalem with his disciples this old symbolic rite of sacrifice as a thanksgiving for freedom; but that night a greater delivery was in progress, the freeing of mankind from sin, not merely from some ancient tyranny. On to this ceremony Christ grafted this new sacrifice of himself, the new Paschal Lamb.⁵ *Ecce Agnus Dei, qui tollit peccata mundi*. As St Paul says, 'For Christ our Pasch is sacrificed. (1 Cor. 5, 5-7.)

St John in his Visions frequently refers to Christ as the Lamb. The lamb was the symbol for sacrifice, the blood the life of the thing sacrificed, and once offered to God, in some way sharing in God's life. Thus St John would have us signed with the blood of the Lamb.

The Eastern mind is one that works by means of symbols, but a symbol must be a concrete thing. We speak of Christ's willingness to accept anything, including even death, which might follow on his doing his Father's will, as being the most worthy act of Christ as Man; the Eastern, the Jew, simplifies this rationalising of a complex act into an image, the image of the Lamb led to the slaughter, a lamb that opened not its mouth. When religion was real to the world, that was the meaning of sacrifice; the Lamb represented themselves who were primarily being offered to God, not physically, but in their minds and wills, their essentially human parts. Christ the Lamb of God is Christ the Victim, our representative. Thus the title given to him at the beginning of his ministry was fulfilled at its end.

⁵ For the Last Supper being the Paschal meal cf. Lagrange's Commentaries on the Gospels.

SOME LETTERS OF BLESSED JORDAN OF SAXONY

Translated by K. E. POND

[Blessed Jordan of Saxony, first Master General after St Dominic, entered the Dominican Order in 1220. Among his many labours he had the care of the Convent of St Agnes at Bologna, and when he was prevented by the duties of his office from visiting the Sisters, he wrote letters to them which embodied his teaching. In the original Latin the letters to Blessed Diana (the Prioress) and the other nuns read quite freshly after a lapse of seven centuries. Their spiritual teaching is as important now as then. A very small selection is here given in translation.]¹

I

BROTHER JORDAN, useless servant of the Order of Preachers, to his dear daughters in Christ the Sisters of St Agnes at Bologna: seek and receive Christ Jesus.

When I see you so much of one mind and so eager in walking with the Lord, and when I find that you seek nothing except him who alone is able to satisfy you, and without whom whatever (else) you have is not riches indeed but poverty, it is a comfort to me, dear daughters, to think about you. And you possess him so much the more completely in proportion as you have surrendered yourselves to him, practising detachment both of body and soul, that your Bridegroom, who alone has redeemed body and soul, may possess you fully and that, as the Apostle says, you may be holy in body and spirit. And indeed it is most certain that God gives himself to us the more lavishly in the measure in which we are generous of ourselves towards him.

Since I perceive, then, that you have hearts ready to dare all things and that not only have you left for the love of Jesus Christ, your soul's bridegroom, whatever you *could* give up for him, but that you faithfully labour each day to see how you can strip yourselves more and more, and to cast your care upon the Lord and to cling only to the love of your Redeemer, to cleave to whom is (your) good: perceiving these things, then, not without heartfelt joy do I give thanks unto him who has called you unto the grace in which you now are, working in you so that you may both will perfection and achieve it in the measure of your goodwill. See to it, dear Sisters, that you do not receive this grace in vain; for it is a very special good

¹ Translated from the Latin: *B. Jordanis de Saxonis Opera*, cura Fr J.-J. Berthier, O.P., Friburgi Helvetiorum, 1899.

which you have received from him, a perfect gift which did not derive its origin from you but came from above, coming down from the Father of lights who shines in your hearts by grace, calling you into his marvellous light. Therefore while you have the light, walk towards the light, that the darkness may not overtake you: walk, I say, in the light of your God.

He who walks in an orderly manner does not crawl through negligence, nor does he rush headlong in his thoughtless disorder and impetuosity. This, indeed, which I now speak of is the evil I fear for you before all others, lest, I mean, there be found among you Sisters who indiscreetly and without moderation hastily take refuge in an excessive flow of tears, or who make themselves singular by vigils or abstinences; or lest some other affliction of the kind should prove too much for your frail bodies. For you are capable of fewer things than you imagine and the strength of any one of you is easily almost exhausted—and that too when she still believes that much strength remains in her body.

I have often warned you about this, as you know, for I am always afraid of it for you, and to keep on writing the same things to you is not indeed idleness on my part, for it is necessary for you. About this matter, therefore, use discretion.

For the rest, as you are praying to our Lord, and have been answered, about the students of Padua, where a good twenty honest men have since come in (to the Order); so do you now take care to give abundant thanks to him, and do not slacken in your prayers by one jot or tittle.

The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with your spirit. Amen.

Brother Gerard, our travelling companion, gives you greeting in Christ Jesus.

III

Brother Jordan, useless servant of the Order of Preachers, to his dear sister in Christ, Diana, at Bologna, salvation and the consolation of the Holy Ghost, the Paraclete.

What I hear about you, that you are worried and troubled about my illness, does not please me—as if you wished to exclude me from the number of the sons of God and wished that I should have no share in the Passion of Jesus Christ our Redeemer. Don't you know that God scourges every son whom he receives? Don't you want him to receive me among his sons? Is your disturbance of mind good? If you want me to enter into the Kingdom, do let me tread the path which leads to the Kingdom; for it behoves us to enter there through many tribulations.

If illness were to turn out to my (spiritual) harm, it would indeed please me that you should take it hardly. But if it is good and profit-

able for me, I don't want you to disturb yourself in any way, Sister, over what is for my good. And so if you want to give me consolation and to ward off the cause of my trouble, lay aside your sadness of spirit and be willing to be cheered up. Only pray for me to the Lord, and ask him that whatever future suffering has to be borne may be turned into my correction and thus into an advantage for me. The good and faithful craftsman knows how much purifying his vessel needs; and so we must submit to his will in all things and leave our mode of life in his hands. All the same, you should know that whereas recently I was laid low not only by fever but by other complaints, now by God's help I have recovered. . . . Take heart then, and keep always in view that life where no disease enters, as the Prophet says: 'There shall no evil come to thee: nor shall the scourge come near thy dwelling' (Ps. xc, v. 10, *Douay translation*). Certainly here in the miseries of our present sojourning, the evils of sin draw near to us. And since many are the scourges of the sinner, it is not strange if in this life we are scourged for our excesses; and so I, too, am ready for scourges if I may thus reach that dwelling-place, namely God, to which no scourge draws near; for no evil of sin enters there, that is, into those most pure and lightsome mansions into which may the loving and holy Son of God, Jesus Christ, he who is blessed for ever and ever, vouchsafe to bring me, together with you. Amen.

Goodbye and greet my dear daughters (for me) and cheer them in the Lord. Brother Gerard sends affectionate greetings both to you and them.

VIII

Brother Jordan, useless servant of the Order of Preachers, to his dear daughter in Christ, Diana, salvation and consolation of the Holy Spirit, by which consolation the hearts of the children of God are cheered.

There is no doubt that it was formerly handed down by the holy prophets, and more recently by Paul, in whom Christ was speaking, that we ought to rejoice with the servants of Jesus Christ, especially in their happiness and consolations. And so, having fresh reports of the consolation with which you have been cheered, and learning, among the Sisters, of the blessing which has recently been given to you, I too congratulate all the Sisters, for their joy is mine.

And so, dear daughter, although you are not unaware how formerly, wherever I might be, I was always one with you, desiring and seeking your good and that of all the Sisters, yet in the future I will, if God permit, be even more solicitous.

Now the letters which the Sovereign Pontiff gave me for you I commit to your attention, and do you be a faithful guardian of them. Lest, however, I should seem ungrateful, I want you to be quite

clear about the wonderful graces which our Saviour bestowed on me after I left you, to whom give thanks many times over for the gifts he has given me. For Christ has drawn to the Order eighteen suitable men, whom I recommend to you, with the others, and their purpose is holy.

Greetings . . .

IX

Brother Jordan, useless servant of the Order of Preachers, to his dear daughter in Christ, Sister Diana, of St Agnes, Bologna, eternal salvation.

Dear Sister, your prudence knows well enough that so long as we are detained in the exile of this world, we all struggle against many immeasurable defects and are not able to attain to that stability which will be given in the future life. And this is the reason why we do not bear ourselves with equanimity in all those things which happen round about us. Sometimes we are too much elated by prosperity, at others too much dismayed by misfortunes. Yet it behoves us, since we want to attain future immortality, to conform ourselves at least in some slight measure to our future life while we are still in this present one, in that we should centre our hearts on God's excellence and, as far as we can, we should strive to place all our hope, all our trust and all our support in the Lord, in order that, as God remains unchanging and unmoved in himself, so we may imitate him as far as we can in that very quality. For he is a safe refuge, never failing, always an abiding place, and the more one flees to him, the more securely does one stand firm. And so the Saints, who had such very great hope in the Lord, easily despised whatever misfortune might happen to them in this life. And do you, dear Sister, flee to the Lord ever more and more, and whatever of harshness or pain may fall to your lot it will not touch the centre of your heart, since that will have been firmly fixed. Impress this well and frequently upon your heart and induce your Sisters to do likewise.

XXV

Brother Jordan, useless servant of the Order of Preachers, eternal salvation to his dear daughter in Christ, Diana.

They who survive, still live on to die; they grieve and are saddened by the death of their friends who die before them. For they who precede others in death, since they are already dead, now no longer mourn for the death of those who die after them. You, then, dear Sister, predeceased your father a long time ago (for you have now been dead a long time if your life is hidden with Christ in glory: but he, as I have recently learnt at Milan, is [but lately] dead), and so it is proper that you should not grieve over his death: or if you do grieve, consider yourself not yet completely dead. I do not say this

indeed as if his death did not touch me: it touches me in very truth, but chiefly on your account. Yet you ought to ponder over the mercy of God, how he takes away from you your parents in the flesh, who are parents for this world only, that he may give to you a spiritual and eternal friend. See how he takes away what you were yet not able to keep, that he may grant you an everlasting friend whom you need not lose for all eternity. Amen.

I have written you this hastily from Milan, for the messenger cannot wait.

Goodbye, and greet all your Sisters for me. I shall see you soon, if God will.

XXVII

Brother Jordan, useless servant of the Order of Preachers, to his dear daughter in Christ, Sister Diana, and the whole Chapter of the Sisters of St Agnes at Bologna, in the choir of the holy virgins who follow the Lamb, the Virgin's Son, whithersoever he goeth.

I do not write much to you at present because I have every hope that, God willing, I shall soon be speaking to you face to face. But in the meantime, dear daughters, do each and every one of you put me, a wretched sinner, into your prayers to God, that he may grant me his good grace so that I may be able, his grace pre-venting and following me, to achieve his will fully in the ministry committed to my charge.

For I have great confidence in your prayers, chiefly in that you pray with one mind and heart, for it is rare that when many pray some at least should not be heard.

Now if temptations hitherto unknown come upon you, don't be frightened, because these are the battles and rebellions against which the Lord would have his servants and handmaids to be valiant and great-hearted: for the Lord, whose war it is, is your helper. For what prince, if he were mighty in battle, would not immediately arise to help his frail and devoted little handmaids and sisters fighting on his account and in his stead, if only they do not flee in the time of warfare but turn their face towards him and call upon him? Therefore, fight not only manfully, but also wisely, for Solomon says that one should go forth to battle methodically. Do you, then, fight prudently, until you gradually, not violently, obtain the mastery over the flesh: and so, proficient in the practice of spiritual virtues one by one, ascend the ladder of perfection, not at one bound but step by step, and at long last reach the end of all consummation.

And to conclude this short sermon, since there should be measure in all things, and you should be people of measure, only the divine

love knows neither limit nor measure. But that is fostered not by afflicting your flesh, but in holy desires and loving meditations and through the touchwood of sisterly love by which every one of you loves her neighbour as herself.

* . . . *

Brother Bernard, the Prior Provincial, greets you.

ST DAVID AND WALES

BY

ILLTUD EVANS, O.P.



IN St David's Day Welshmen are apt to make speeches. For once in the year the virtue of speaking Welsh is generally conceded. One of the objections to giving much time to Welsh in the schools used to be its lack of 'commercial value': Welsh, it was argued reasonably enough, brought no dividends. John Capgrave, in his *Legenda Nova Historiæ Angliæ*, tells a story which suggests that Welsh may be very useful indeed:

'A certain Welshman coming from the diocese of Menevia was captured by the Saracens, and was put in chains together with a German. The Welshman cried aloud day and night in his own language to St David, "Dewi, wared!", which is to say, "David, come to my aid!" And, wonderful to relate, he suddenly found himself restored to his own country. Making this known to Gervase, at that time the bishop of those parts, he was taken into the dwelling of the latter on account of so notable a miracle. But his companion the German, considered to be privy to what had happened, was submitted to beatings and placed in even stricter custody. He remembered, therefore, how his companion frequently called out "Dewi, wared!", and although he did not understand the meaning of the words he decided to cry aloud in the same manner and began to exclaim, "Dewi wared!" Without delay he was suddenly caught up and brought to his own home, and he knowing nothing of how it came about. He tried everywhere to find out what the words might mean, but without success until he came to Paris where a certain Welshman made known to him the meaning of those words. He gave thanks to God, and in acknowledgment of so notable a benefit he decided to go as a pilgrim to St David's shrine at Menevia. Arrived there, he was seen by his companion, who greatly wondered and greeted him with tears of joy. And to him he told the whole account of what had happened'.

This story, which I have translated from the Appendix to the Bollandist life of St David,¹ is perhaps more edifying than accurate. The earliest life of St David, that by Rhygyfarch, was written at least five centuries after David's death and is concerned to forward the claims of Menevia against Canterbury, by extolling its first bishop rather than by providing a critical biography. It may well be that half-a-dozen other saints have as good a claim to be the patron saint of Wales. But David found a biographer, who, as he himself tells us, 'rashly applied the capacity of my intelligence to these things', and produced a convincing picture of one who, 'with the consent of all the bishops, kings, princes, nobles and all grades of the whole Britannic race, was made archbishop, and his monastery too is declared the metropolis of the whole country, so that whoever ruled it should be accounted archbishop'.²

Giraldus Cambrensis—and this year is the eighth centenary of his birth—devoted the best part of his life to pursuing the metropolitan claims of Menevia. He failed in his task, and indeed admits³ that he followed 'tradition and public opinion rather than the certain proof of history'. Thus it is that the name of David has become a war-cry, not to say a shibboleth, and it is impossible now to go behind the elaborate superstructure of legend and partisan argument to rediscover David himself. Each generation finds in him an acceptable model of the virtues thought to be notably Welsh. His title of *Dewi Ddyfrwr*, 'David the Waterman', recalling his austerity of life, has often enough inspired a total abstinence peroration; and his dying words, 'Brethren, keep the faith', have been quoted in support of faiths that would have greatly surprised the adversary of the Pelagians.

And yet the association of David with a language and a tradition which, however distorted, still remain in the land that was his own, is a reality. One remembers the prophecy of the old man of Pencader, with which Giraldus ends his *Description of Wales*:

'Nor do I think, that any other nation than this of Wales, or any other language, whatever may hereafter come to pass, shall, in the day of Judgment, answer for this corner of the earth'.

More than seven hundred years have passed since then, and despite all the probabilities of history, nearly a million people would still need no interpreter if, as a hoary Welsh story suggests, St Peter proves to be a monoglot Welshman.

It is easy to smile at the credulities of the past, but one can find in their artless joy in believing something we have lost. As Père

1 *Acta Sanctorum*, Vol. VII.

2 *Vita Sancti Davidis*, 53. (ed. Wade-Evans, *Y Cymmrodor*, 1913.)

3 *Retractationes* (*Works*, I, p. 426).

Delehaye pointed out, the 'legends' and 'inventions' of hagiography have a deep truth of their own. They may not suit the exacting demands of modern criticism, but they reflect a consciousness of the providential *unity* of human life. The stock miracles and the marvellous prophecies may have a precarious connection with the particular saint whose 'life' they adorn, but they are never idle inventions: however crudely, they proclaim a world where God's hand is seen at work in unlikely places. And a world where the language you speak may have its providential uses!

REVIEWS

A NEW FIORETTI. Translated with introduction and notes by John R. H. Moorman, D.D. (S.P.C.K.; 3s. 6d.)

The exquisite series of tales whose English title is *The Little Flowers of St Francis* forms but a portion of a collection known to scholars as the *Actus Beati Francisci*, itself only one of half-a-dozen similar groups of stories of equal or greater historical respectability. It has been the happy idea of Dr Moorman to 'round off and complete our collection of all that is known of the life of the Poverello' in English with a new selection from this mass of writing, and he has headed each tale with a scholarly little note indicating its origin and drift. The collection is introduced by a prefatory essay that sums up the critical problem embedded in Franciscan origins with the competence we have come to expect from this erudite student of Franciscan history. Dr Moorman has already made all workers in Franciscan origins his debtors with a very significant study of the whole problem in his *Sources for the Life of St Francis*; the introductory essay here, though necessarily much briefer, yields nothing in ability to that fine work. It is a pleasure to be able to assure lovers of Franciscan literature that this little book will make a notable addition to their Seraphic collections.

The seventy-five tales that make up this book are done into an English that aims successfully at reproducing the directness, the sincerity, and at times even the bluntness of the originals. There is nothing here, we must warn the reader, of the archaic and almost Scriptural manner that makes much of the charm of Arnold's *Fioretti*. Moorman's idiom is strictly contemporary; but the modern reader will probably prefer his strength and compactness to the more leisurely loveliness of a bygone age.

It is a pity not to be able to stop here. But the reader who has no Latin or who cannot easily come by the originals must be warned of one or two slips that mar this fine translation. The first is so strange

a one as to be almost certainly a printer's error. In the tale headed *St Francis Complains of Ill-treatment* (p. 19), the saint is not only presented as complaining bitterly at the blows of the angry countryman, but as finding it 'quite impossible to give thanks to God for his sufferings'. Dr Moorman speaks of this as a 'very human story', but he must certainly know that after his conversion Francis was never so 'human' as that, and that habitual choice of the divine will in everything that befell made the very groundwork of Francis's mind. The Darmstadt manuscript, of which this tale is a translation, has: *et nihilominus tamen Deo gratias egit pro huiusmodi dolore*, i.e., 'and he thanked God for this pain notwithstanding', I suggest that Dr Moorman wrote the word 'possible' and only a piece of typographical bad luck produced the offending 'im'.

On page 36, a Brother who for penance had to plunge fully clothed into the river is described as walking through the December day 'soaking wet and terrified of catching cold'. The original has: *tremens præ nimio frigore*, which means 'shivering with the excessive cold', i.e., of his wet garment. There is no suggestion of preoccupation with a possible future illness.

It is a pity that Dr Moorman ended the tale entitled *The Friars and the Possession of Books* (p. 41) at the point at which he did. The reader who depends solely upon Dr Moorman will be surprised to learn that the next words in the text run: 'Note here that Bro. Leo used to say that the intention of St Francis in the Rule was that we should have books only in common', etc. They are surely as relevant to the subject matter as anything in Dr Moorman's story.

In any tale that is cut out of a long context there will often be difference of opinion as to where exactly the story should begin and end. But in the tale entitled *St Francis Passes on Praise to God* (p. 49), I cannot help thinking Dr Moorman's choice of section unfortunate. The words 'these people never do anything out of respect for him they ought to worship' are extremely obscure in Dr Moorman's text because they refer to something that Bartholomew of Pisa (from whom the passage is translated) had said earlier. Quoting St Francis he says: 'Just as in pictures of our Lord and our Lady painted on wood our Lord and our Lady are honoured, while the picture keeps back nothing for itself, so the servant of God', etc. The phrase 'these people', etc., describes the universal human tendency to honour creatures more than the unseen God; if a picture, the attention may be held by the colouring or the beauty of the picture; if a person, the human charm or the wonderful heroism may rivet the attention upon the creature to the exclusion of God. (There are admirers of Francis who deserve this stricture; and they are not confined to the 13th century.) But the picture *cannot* keep back God's honour: the servant of God *will not* keep it back. The whole passage is highly theocentric. In its account of this occasion the *Speculum Perfectionis* puts the words about pictures in the middle of the incident, as constituting the essence of the story. (See *Spec. Perf.* Sabatier 1898, p. 81.)

These slight flaws notwithstanding, we have no hesitation in welcoming this painstaking and scholarly addition to Franciscan lore in English.

ETHELBERT CARDIFF, O.F.M.

AN OLD APOSTLE SPEAKS. By Vincent McNabb, O.P., with a Memoir by Fr Gerald Vann, O.P. (Blackfriars Publications; 1s. 6d.)

Those who knew and loved Fr Vincent will be glad to have the opportunity of sharing in these excerpts from his sermons and retreats. They will read them not only for the deep and simple truths, which were the *medulla* of Fr Vincent's life as an Apostle of Truth, but their memories will clothe them with the living voice and expression, which so often opened up unspoken visions beyond. More than anyone else one was always clearly aware that the Scriptures and the *Summa* were the sources of his life and thought. He applied the spirit of poverty all round, even in his choice of words and hence achieved on many occasions the chastened economy of the inspired word. And this arose not from any straining after literary form but from his own ascetic practice and self-discipline, so well illustrated in a family retreat: 'One very good mortification is *always* to get at the real truth—to search for it at great pains and having got it, preach it and see what happens'. That was not merely advice to his fellow-Dominicans: it was his own life-long rule—his work, as he loved to call it.

After truth comes love, and Fr Vincent's dying words: 'I have no enemies' did sum up his life, which he had spent in loving all men. Not only did he love the physically poor, but even more, the spiritually poor. 'Outside in the world there is a poor man at the door, and he doesn't know he is poor. Let us pity him, and let us ask pardon for any sin of ours that has made it more difficult for him to know he is poor and still outside the door of the great Gift of Faith which God is waiting to offer to his mind and heart'. We are grateful to Fr Vann for having stressed this all-embracing love and that mainly from quotations from Fr Vincent's own words. How necessary today are the mind and heart of an Old Apostle for a starving and spiritually sick world!

P. J. FLOOD

THE SORROW OF GOD. By Gerald Vann, O.P. (Aquinas Papers No. 7. Blackfriars, Oxford; 1s.)

When any question is asked about the possibility of sorrow or suffering in God, the professional theologians are content to reply with a rather frosty, 'God is impassible'. Fr Vann, with his uncanny instinct for the problems that most afflict the contemporary mind, has decided to explore this dark and difficult matter. To our knowledge it is pioneer work for one who accepts the principles of the *philosophia perennis*, and perhaps more remains to be said.

The key to Fr Vann's treatment is the love of God. Love implies sympathy, the will-to-share, pity. As St Thomas says in a quite different context, *misericordia*, pity, is first cousin to charity, or even

the outflow of charity. The supreme example of God's will-to-share in the sufferings of mankind is the Passion of his Son, Jesus Christ, which we must remember to see *sub specie æternitatis* as God sees it. God's willing 'involvement' (an ugly word Fr Vann seems fond of) in human suffering remains, for with him there is neither past nor present. But what do we mean by God's 'will-to-share'? That is the crux of the whole thesis. Using human analogies, Fr Vann points out that sorrow and joy, even with us, are not necessarily successive states but that often they interpenetrate one another: 'the deepest joy is that in which there is the trace of tears', something perhaps of what Virgil was trying to say. Apply this with all the necessary reservations to God, remember, as the early Church did, the suffering of Christ *with* the joy of his Resurrection and glory, and we come to glimpse a possible state, transcending joy and sorrow, where God sees 'the good, which is love, emerging from evil and the evil only in terms of that triumphant good'. These words remind one of St Paul's, 'Death is swallowed up in victory'.

Such is an outline of the thesis, delicately and respectfully handled, and the dangers of sentimentalism firmly avoided. We hope Fr Vann will expand his thesis a little and perhaps re-write it for the many simple and anxious souls who will welcome his doctrine.

J. D. CRICHTON

THE BOOK OF THE LOVER AND THE BELOVED. Translated from the Catalan of Ramon Lull, with an Introductory Essay by E. Allison Peers. (S.P.C.K.; 5s.)

Professor Peers has recast his introduction and translated the treatise afresh from the critical text of the original. The improvements on the first edition of twenty years ago are slight quantitatively but they give light in many passages: in the description of love, 'It is boldness. It is fervour. It is fear', becomes 'Love is the mingling of boldness and fear, that comes through great fervour'; 'each declared his Beloved perfection' becomes 'each one had the Beloved for his precious possession'. In addition the translator now includes the paragraphs from *Blanquerna* which immediately precede the *Book of the Lover and the Beloved* in its original context, and an appendix of additional paragraphs found in certain versions only.

These improvements will help the reader to draw more benefit from this classic, in which Blessed Ramon sets forth 366 short paragraphs for daily meditation. Some of these would take a day to sort out—'Lover and Beloved are so strictly united in the Beloved that they are one actuality in Essence. And Lover and Beloved are actualities distinct, which agree without contrariety or diversity of essence'. Others will bring a happy conviction to the seeker for right order in his spiritual life—'Ninety of these hundred fear Me lest I should condemn them to Hell, and ten love Me that I may grant them Glory; hardly is there one who loves Me for My goodness and nobility'. The objective type of spirituality conveyed in this lament is characteristic of the

book as of the age in which it was written. The scholastic training and interests of the author did not deprive him of the vigorous directness of a Spanish mystic. We look forward to further translations of this attractive writer by Professor Peers.

CONRAD PEPLER, O.P.

LE BAPTEME, *Fêtes et Saisons*, Special Number (14). (Centre de Pastorale Liturgique, Blackfriars, Oxford; 1s. 6d.)

Anyone who has seen the ordinary issues of *Fêtes et Saisons* will know how attractive and excellent they are. Now the same Centre is publishing a special series on Baptism, the Mass, Marriage, etc., as instruments of the liturgical apostolate.

This, the first number, on Baptism, gives in simple language an explanation of the meaning and the ceremonies of Baptism. Every phase of the baptismal service is illustrated by first-rate photographs which are both accurate and charming.

The compilers say that a former issue on the Mass (now being revised) has been used by many priests in instructing their people. There is no doubt at all that we must nowadays instruct through pictures and use 'active methods' even with adults. We hope that the Church in this country will wake up to the urgency of the matter and begin producing an English *Fêtes et Saisons* and, better still, a series of Catholic documentaries such as are suggested by this French paper that lies before us. Perhaps, even, the C.P.L. could produce a series of silent films which could be used anywhere in the Church by enterprising priests and teachers.

J.D.C.

A RETREAT FOR PRIESTS. By Ronald Knox. (Sheed & Ward; 10s. 6d.)

These eighteen conferences for priests, with passages explicitly devoted to the needs of religious, will be eagerly bought by those who have heard them from the author's lips. He remarks with approbation on the transitory nature of any new vision that may be gained in retreat; but if we are not meant to live permanently on the mount of transfiguration, we can still go on pilgrimage to it from time to time, and be helped in doing so by a guide who has helped us before.

But we hope that a far wider public will be taught to appreciate the Priesthood as Mgr Knox appreciates it, and helped by his compassion for the earthen vessels in which that treasure is carried. He knows the stresses to which they are subjected, well discerns their weaknesses of structure, and has the appropriate word of comfort, strength and exhortation for all.

The newcomers to this guidance will find the vision fresh, yet not so new as to be unintelligible. It is rather a new look at very old and familiar possessions, some of which we have got into the habit of not noticing, others of which we have cared for too much. Stories of the Bible, experiences of our youth, thoughts we formed in the seminaries, our common and our private histories, our natural and supernatural inheritances are reviewed and revalued for us. Above all we learn better—and what layman or cleric cannot do with the lesson?—what manner of calling it is to be a Priest.

Ivo THOMAS, O.P.

OLIVER. By Rev. H. Gaffey, O.P. (Gill; 3s. 6d.)

This is a short life of Blessed Oliver Plunkett, the martyred Archbishop of Armagh. At first sight one is put off! The paper 'jacket' is truly terrible—part Roman purple, part black, with line drawings in white of a gallows, a bit of chain, a ship, a palm and a sprig of shamrock, ranged presumably as decorations round a medallion head of the Martyr. The portrait alone in its medallion on a plain background would have been more effective. The black-and-white illustrations in the book are good, though more than one little drawing of the same gallows seems unnecessary! The two coloured illustrations are poor.

The story itself is well told in straightforward, simple English. Especially good is the account of Oliver's return from the security of his life in Rome to the dangers and hardships of Ireland in those years of persecution. We have, too, a graphic description of his indefatigable work for souls, as Archbishop of Armagh, undertaken at the constant risk of his own life. The account of his capture, imprisonment and trial, and finally of his death at Tyburn, is all the more moving for being so briefly and simply written.

We read on the flyleaf that the book was written for boys and girls; yet it is not a 'child's book'. Rather is it a book for every age, and many will learn from its pages of a holy and heroic Martyr for the Faith, who had been but a name to them before.

FFLORENS ROCH

MOTHER F. A. FORBES. By G. L. Sheil. (Longmans; 8s. 6d.)

This is the life of a nun who entered a teaching order—the Society of the Sacred Heart—at the age of thirty-one. Except for the first chapters and the closing one, the book consists mainly of letters written by Mother Forbes herself to a friend. Through these letters we learn not only about her active and literary work, which had to be set aside during periods of painful and wearying illness, but we get to know the woman herself, her selflessness, her courage, her kindness, her whimsical humour that no suffering could altogether suppress. We have too in these letters little gems of descriptive writing. In a few words we are shown little bits of garden; budding trees; her bird friends; and that glimpse of the sea from her window that gave her such joy when she was ill at the Brighton convent. From Craiglockhart, where the Sacred Heart nuns have their Training College for teachers, she writes of the Craig, the hill close behind the house, clothed in springtime with masses of yellow flowering 'whins' (called 'gorse' by the unmusical English); of the sun shining upon it, 'and the whole garden flooded with the apricoty, aromatic smell of it'. Sometimes she uses the outdoor things to show a spiritual truth: 'How good God is', she writes. 'Did you ever detach a limpet from a rock? I did once. . . . The limpet became a shell—to hold Holy Water'.

Mother Forbes was an enthusiastic Highlander. During her years

at Craiglockhart she founded a Scottish Association in the College. She counted among her friends students of Scottish history and tradition, Hebridean singers, Highland pipers, many of whom had probably never entered a convent before in their lives. They found a sympathetic listener in this Catholic nun, and one with real knowledge too, though she was so humble about it. She would sometimes enlist their help for her Scottish meetings, and they gave it gladly. Piper McIan offered to come and pipe 'whenever Mother Forbes would like him to'.

What was the secret of her charm, felt by all who came in contact with her? Was it perhaps her holiness? One cannot read her letters without becoming aware of the utter humility of a great soul, nor of the longing that filled her whole being, increasing as the years went on, the longing for God, and for union with him.

This is a book to read, and then to read again.

FFLORENS ROCH

QUAKER PROFILES. By Sir George Newman. (Bannisdale Press; 7s. 6d.)

This little book is a collection of essays, mainly written for the Friends' Quarterly Review. The characters and careers of six eminent Quakers are sketched: of George Fox, the founder, Thomas Hodgkin, the historian of the Anglo-Saxons, Joshua Rowntree, public figure of the 1880's, Rendel Harris, paleographer of Cambridge and Leiden, Elizabeth Newman, poetess of the '80's and '90's, and of Joseph Rowntree, who in his cocoa works at York realised his projects of caring for the conditions of his workers.

But it is the essay on the 'Cardinal tenets of Quakerism' which informs the book as a whole and helps us to understand the principles of the Society of Friends and the lives of its members. Sir George Newman suggests the main tenets as four: the principle of the Inward Light, the reliance upon Spiritual Experience, Non-institutional and Non-ritual organization, and a Way of Life which avoids 'form and fashion' and devotes itself to the needs of others.

One is perplexed at first by the disconcerting goodness of these men and women. Their devotion to the cardinal virtues was unremitting, and they themselves were convinced of the fundamental goodness of others. For the Inward Light is in every man, and the only true baptism is that of spiritual experience. The Society is at once vocational and semi-hereditary. Membership is, as it were, of disposition. A little band for whom 'experience, and not some intellectual assent is our reliance, our strong tower', scarcely could include scoundrels. It is the fact that they are self-confessedly a select people, in spite of their insistence on the catholicity of the Inward Light, that explains the consistency of their good works and their reputation.

These are, then, studies in Pelagian sanctity. Redemption is at hand for every man who will recognise and trust in the Inward Light,

the Divine Seed, which is already within him. The virtues of this 'way' are not theological; its spiritual life is anti-ascetic, humanitarian, above all dependent on an inexpressible sensibility of God's presence within the soul.

But it is a pity that 'the early Christians and first Franciscans' are claimed as also holding that 'in spiritual experience alone reliance is to be placed'.
R. DU BOULAY

JEANNE JUGAN. By Chanoine A. Helleu. Translated by L. Herlihy. (Coldwell; 2s. 6d.)

The life of the foundress of the Little Sisters of the Poor told by the vice-postulator of her Cause is designed to prepare the way for an authoritative biography. The author understandably omits the evidence of any *advocatus diaboli* and the translator expects the author's piety to cover the defects of style and translation. But we are ready to forgive these exasperating hindrances to reading in view of the great work for the aged poor, founded a hundred years ago when charity was elsewhere so cold, here recounted.
N.P.

! THINKING WITH MYSELF. By Mary Foster (Gill, Dublin; 1s. 6d.)

This book contains 'simple meditations on the life of our Lord based on verses from the Sacred Scripture'; and it illustrates the empty-headedness which modern education leaves as its fruit. Many people cannot begin to think their own thoughts about the most dramatic and the most real event in history. They do, in fact, need to be helped by such books as this one with its 'Need I envy the Holy Women so much? Ah yes, I must!' and all the other devices for stirring the sluggish mind and heart. But these spiritual pills are only palliatives; we require a violent purgative and after that to swallow the Book itself.
S.P.

DECOUVERTE DE LA MESSE. Par Bernard Guyon (La Clarté-Dieu XX; Cerf-Blackfriars; 2s.)

The author is a layman. He had been always devoted to the Mass, but it was a retreat before the war preached by M. Paris which opened to him the depths of the mystery, and later as a prisoner-of-war he was given the opportunity to lecture to his fellow-officers on the theme. The discovery came by way of understanding the structure and unity of the Canon, how the Mass is performed in memory of Christ's action, how the action is a mystery not a miracle, an act of praise by means of offering, and finally a communicating—a *common eating* of one Body. All this is set forth in simple and straightforward language in 75 pages. The method has one defect which it shares with much modern liturgical writing—it depends too much on the historical approach, critical of a great deal of later developments, living in the past instead of accepting wholeheartedly the present Act of Sacrificial Communion. But this book is fresh and invigorating and will help many.
S.P.

TWELVE TALES OF THE LIFE AND ADVENTURES OF SAINT IMAGINUS.

Edited by Frances Margaret McGuire. With Illustrations by Betty Arnott. (Sheed & Ward; 6s.)

Here are some delightful and not wholly imaginary tales about a wholly imaginary saint. Imagus is an ageless type of a certain very real and very lovable kind of holiness; he is a composite of Columbanus, Francis of Assisi, Vincent Ferrer, John Bosco and many others of their ingenuous and largely inimitable brand of sanctity. The hero of these tales is found at one time in a medieval village and at another amongst the skyscrapers of a modern city, and is obviously equally at home in either. The stories themselves show a whimsical authenticity, whether St Imagus is encouraging the guardian angel of an aviator or accepting a rebuke from a dog, doing an unusual financial deal with a stockbroker or having a sympathetic word with St Jerome's lion. It is a truly joyous volume, attractive not only in its subject matter but also in its layout, its type and its delightful illustrations. H. J. C.

SAINTS BY REQUEST. By Joan Windham. (Sheed & Ward; 6s.)

This is a vintage wine that needs no bush, for it comes from the *Six O'Clock* bin. Even the author's mild prefatory apology for her 'alleged indiscriminate use of capital letters' is unnecessary. Her technique is perfect for its purpose, except perhaps in the matter of historical accuracy. One wonders, for example, whether the poetic licence required by the technique would justify the introduction of Franciscans amongst the first followers of St Dominic. But perhaps this is being unduly fussy under the circumstances. The word pictures (if not the illustrations) of the fifteen saints in the present volume are as vivid and authentic as those of its two forerunners. That is very high praise. H. J. C.

THIS AGE AND MARY. By Rev. Michael O'Carroll, C.S.Sp., D.D. (The Mercier Press; 6s.)

Père Garrigou-Lagrange in his introduction to his *De Deo Uno* (1938) added an excellent essay on 'Theology and the Interior Life'. The Irish Holy Ghost Fathers have now given us several books which embody the solid principles of this essay. The works of the late Fr Edward Leen have found many enthusiastic readers. The same spirit of *sapida sapientia* is carried on by Dr O'Carroll in this collection of twenty-seven papers on Marian theology. A good test might be made on what is the longest section in the book (pp. 58-70) on the 'Mediatress of All Graces'. Here is a debate on our Lady's mediation which is quite modern. It has been going on for the past twenty-five years among the theologians. Can it be taken out of its technical forms and presented successfully to the intelligent laity? Yes, Dr O'Carroll does bring it off and we are grateful.

Other essays on the 'Immaculate Heart', on the 'Queen of the

Legion', and the 'Queen of Ireland'—the title given by Pius XI in his personal message to the memorable Eucharistic Congress of 1932—show the justification of the title 'This Age and Mary'. But even when he is explaining the traditional doctrine, the author has a freshness of exposition that immediately arrests our attention and his application to modern conditions is never forced but flows easily and naturally from the great truth. These essays have two good qualities. They are objective, avoiding the deviations of sentimental lyricism, and they are universal in the sense that they are satisfying deductions from clearly expressed universal principles. It is in this way that true piety is nourished. P. J. F.

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